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Commission on the Status of Women
Fifty-fourth session
1-12 March 2010
Item 3 (a) (i) of the provisional agenda*
Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled "Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century": implementation of strategic objectives and action in critical areas of concern and further actions and initiatives: review of the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the twenty-third special session and its contribution to shaping a gender perspective in the realization of the Millennium Development Goals

Statement by Catholics for Choice, the Center for Health and Gender Equity, Inc., the Girls' Power Initiative, the International Planned Parenthood Federation, the International Alliance of Women, Ipas and Population Action International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/CN.6/2010/1.

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Statement

1. In 2010 the Economic and Social Council will review implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and how it can contribute to meeting the Millennium Development Goals. We would like to offer the following points for consideration in the panel discussions and plenary sessions, focusing on four issues of great importance: managing the consequences of sexual violence against women and girls; broadening the involvement of men in reproductive health; enabling women to exercise their reproductive rights; and linking or integrating various aspects of reproductive health.

A. Managing the consequences of sexual violence against women and girls

2. In its resolution 1820 (2008), the Security Council called on Governments to debunk myths that fuel sexual violence and to take measures to particularly eliminate sexual violence against women and girls in conflict situations. This was reiterated in Council resolution 1888 (2009).

3. Paragraphs 124 (g) and 125 (a) of the Beijing Platform for Action not only address sexual violence in conflict situations but also in daily life and call for the development of strategies to ensure that women who survive violence are not revictimized because of gender-insensitive laws or judicial or enforcement practices and for the provision of medical, psychological and legal services to help them cope with the consequences of violence.

4. In addition to measures to eradicate sexual and domestic violence, we call for enhanced efforts to effectively implement programmes and interventions to help women and girls who become victims and survivors of domestic and sexual abuse deal with the physical and emotional consequences. This would include provision of prompt treatment of physical and emotional trauma, emergency contraception, safe abortion care, post-exposure prophylaxis of HIV infection, screening and treatment of sexually transmitted infections and socio-legal assistance where women wish to press charges or leave abusive living conditions.

B. Broadening the involvement of men in reproductive health

5. The Platform for Action (see paras. 107 (e) and 109 (l)) calls for programmes to enable men of all ages to effectively take responsibility for promotion of gender equality, responsible sexual and reproductive behaviour, including prevention of sexually transmitted infections and condom use, parental responsibility, and the elimination of violence against women in both public and private life.

6. Growing numbers of groups of men against violence and for gender equity are doing great work to promote gender sensitivity and gender equity. However, the topics of rape-related pregnancy, other unwanted pregnancies and reproductive choice are still not broadly broached in their publications and campaigns.

7. We urge the members of these groups, and men everywhere, to take responsibility for reproductive rights as a men's issue by actively promoting and supporting both safe motherhood and women's access to emergency contraception and safe abortion. Furthermore, when it comes to HIV, sexually transmitted infections and pregnancy prevention, we urge men to share equal responsibility for

partner communication, negotiation and correct use of male and female condoms, the only dual-protection technologies that are available today.

C. Enabling women to exercise their reproductive and sexual rights

8. The Platform for Action (para. 106 (k)) states that prevention of unwanted pregnancies must always be given the highest priority and that women should have access to post-abortion care and safe abortions as permitted by law. It also says that States should consider reviewing laws containing punitive measures against women who have undergone illegal abortions. Over 400 legislators and ministers at the Fourth Global Parliamentarians' Conference on Population and Development, held in October 2009, reiterated this statement and also called for a review of "all laws and practices that still restrict access to sexual and reproductive health services".

9. We call on Governments, multilateral organizations, donor agencies and civil society groups to incorporate full reproductive rights, including access to safe legal abortions, into their advocacy for women's rights.

10. The Platform for Action (para. 83 (k)) also requests Governments to "remove legal and regulatory and social barriers, where appropriate, to sexual and reproductive health education within formal education regarding women's health issues". In addition, it reiterates that reproductive health "also includes sexual health, the purpose of which is the enhancement of life and personal relations" (see para. 9). Accordingly, we ask the aforementioned groups to include education on sexual rights into their programmes of sexual and reproductive health education. This will further help fulfil the need identified in paragraph 95 to meet "the educational and service needs of adolescents to enable them to deal in a positive and responsible way with their sexuality".

D. Linking or integrating various aspects of reproductive health

11. The Platform for Action (para. 106 (c)) emphasizes a need to design and implement, in cooperation with women and community-based organizations, gender-sensitive health programmes that address women's needs throughout their lives, taking into account their multiple roles and responsibilities and demands on their time.

12. The above recommendation was supported by the Fourth Parliamentarians' Conference, which called for the full integration of a basic and affordable package of sexual and reproductive health services and information in community-based facilities, including services for family planning, HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted infections, reproductive tract infections, cervical and breast cancer screening and prevention and maternal and newborn and child health.

13. Some multilateral and civil society organizations are working on aspects of such linkages and integration. We urge more groups to do so and to incorporate aspects of reproductive health that are often left aside into such programmes, for example emergency contraception, safe abortion care, woman-initiated HIV prevention, including female condoms and the genital human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccination.

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Statement by Armenian International Women's Association, Associated Country Women of the World, Baha'i International Community, Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, International Association of Women in Radio and Television, International Federation of Women in Legal Careers, International Federation of Women Lawyers, International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres, International Federation of University Women, Pan Pacific and South-East Asia Women's Association, Soroptimist International, Trickle Up Program, United Nations Association of the United States of America, United States Committee for UNIFEM, Virginia Gildersleeve International Fund, World Federation of Ukrainian Women's Organizations and Zonta International, non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 36 and 37 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

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Statement

1. We, international and national non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council and members of the NGO Committee on the United Nations Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), call special attention to the many important contributions of UNIFEM both to the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and to the integration of the Millennium Development Goals into the international framework for the advancement of gender equality and women's human rights.

2. UNIFEM focuses its activities on one overarching goal: to support implementation, at the national level, of existing international commitments to advance gender equality. In support of this goal, UNIFEM works in the following thematic areas:

(a) Enhancing women's economic security and rights;

(b) Ending violence against women;

(c) Reducing the prevalence of HIV/AIDS among women and girls;

(d) Advancing gender justice through democratic governance in stable and fragile States.

3. UNIFEM views the human rights of women as the lens through which its work is carried out.

4. UNIFEM is active in all regions of the world and at the international, regional, national and global levels, working with countries to formulate and implement laws and policies to eliminate discrimination, promote gender equality in such areas as land and inheritance rights, ensure decent work for women and end violence against women. Through its programmes, UNIFEM also helps institutions to become more accountable on issues related to gender equality and women's rights, to strengthen the capacity and voice of women's rights advocates and to change harmful and discriminatory practices in society. A strong component of UNIFEM's work is its partnerships with women's organizations.

5. UNIFEM's activities are framed by two international agreements: the Beijing Platform for Action, resulting from the Fourth World Conference on Women, held in 1995, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, known as the women's bill of rights. The spirit of these agreements has been affirmed in the Millennium Declaration and in the eight Millennium Development Goals for 2015, which include combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy and gender inequality, and building partnerships for development. In addition, Security Council resolutions 1325 (2000) on women and peace and security, and 1820 (2008) and 1888 (2009) on sexual violence in situations of conflict are crucial references for UNIFEM's work in support of women in conflict and post-conflict situations.

6. UNIFEM's publications have progressively emphasized some aspects of the need to integrate the Millennium Development Goals into the more comprehensive framework for gender equality and women's empowerment contained in the Platform for Action, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and other intergovernmental outcomes in order to

give countries a single, clear set of benchmarks for monitoring progress on these core concerns.

7. In its 2005 publication "Pathway to Gender Equality: CEDAW, Beijing and the MDGs", UNIFEM emphasizes that the understanding and experience generated through the Beijing and the Convention processes can be used to better implement the gender equality obligations and commitments set out in the Millennium Declaration. In that publication, UNIFEM proposes two ways to enhance the synergy between the Beijing Platform for Action, the Convention and the Millennium Development Goals: (a) by identifying connecting points between the three processes, including relating to monitoring and reporting; and (b) by highlighting some critical gender equality concerns for each Millennium Development Goal and pointing out specific measures that Governments have committed to take in these areas.

8. In its publication "Progress of the World's Women 2002, Volume 2: Gender Equality and the Millennium Development Goals", UNIFEM documented progress, or lack thereof, at the national level in meeting the Millennium Development Goals for women's empowerment and gender equality. This publication also brought to the forefront a widely voiced concern of women's equality advocates that the targets and indicators set for all of the Goals were inadequate for measuring and achieving the full scope of Goal 3, to "promote gender equality and empower women".

9. In its publication "Progress of the World's Women 2008/2009: Who Answers to Women?", UNIFEM shows that realizing women's rights and achieving the Millennium Development Goals depends on strengthening accountability for commitments made to women and gender equality. A core component of efforts to update the vision of the Millennium Declaration is to ensure the full participation of women in public decision-making at all levels and to hold to account those responsible for ignoring or violating women's rights.

10. UNIFEM's programmes support gender equality laws, national plans of action for gender equality and essential gender mainstreaming policies, but are also focused on working with partners to support implementation by increasing awareness and resources.

11. UNIFEM is currently studying the data and statistics being compiled on the Millennium Development Goals in order to support public policy formulation and accountability with a view to providing much-needed gender analysis and an understanding of the implications of that data.

12. In its work to advance implementation of the Platform for Action and the Millennium Development Goals, UNIFEM has targeted violence against women, sometimes called "the missing Millennium Development Goal", as a root cause of gender inequality and an obstacle to engendering women's rights worldwide. UNIFEM's efforts in this critical area, including its management of the United Nations Trust Fund in Support of Actions to Eliminate Violence against Women and its "Say NO to Violence against Women" campaign, are important contributions to advancing women's rights.

13. **UNIFEM has supported the efforts that resulted in a resolution by the General Assembly to create a combined gender entity within the United Nations system that will have the positioning, authority, resources and coordination to drive the gender equality agenda.**

14. UNIFEM is the specialized body with operational capacity that Governments, women's advocates and United Nations partners call upon when they need advice on gender-related programmes and policies. We urge continued support of UNIFEM's critical work to achieve the vision of both the Platform for Action, and its goals of development, peace and equality, and the Millennium Development Goals by ensuring that gender equality and women's empowerment are central to policy and programme initiatives.